THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (c) The import bill depends on the overall consumption, indigenous production and prices of crude oil and petroleum products prevailing in the international market.

The contributory factors to the likely increase in import bill for the year 1996-97 are shortfall in indigenous crude production and increase in international prices of crude oil and petroleum products. In order to contain the import bill, measures are being taken to increase the refining capacity in the country by expansion of existing refineries in the public sector and setting up of refineries in joint sector and private sector. Import and parallel marketing of kerosene, LPG and LSHS in private sector has been allowed so as to improve the availability of these products. Steps are being taken to increase crude oil production in the country through application of improved technologies, better understanding of reservoir behaviour, development of new fields, additional development of existing fields and by inviting foreign and private capital in the upstream sector. Oil Pool account is estimated to close with a huge deficit in 1996-97 & consequently, the cumulative oil companies' outstanding, which were Rs. 5700 crores as on March 31, 1996 are estimated to rise to a level of Rs. 15,500 crores as on March 31, 1997. The position of the oil pool account is being monitored on a continuous basis and remedial measures taken to contain the deficit.

Offers of MNCs to Supply LNG

1356. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether about 20 Multinational Companies have submitted offers for supply of liquified natural gas, in response to offers invited by Gas Authority of India Limited;

(b) if so, by when a final decision is likely to be taken on these bids;

(c) the names of countries from where the LNG is being purchased at present;

(d) whether the present purchase are made on single tender basis; if not, what is the basis; and

(e) what is the present landed price of LNG?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Seventeen offers have been received by GAIL for supply of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG).

(b) The final decision on these bids is expected early next year.

(c) to (e) No LNG is being imported at present.

BRPL Project for Utilisation of surplus Naphtha

1357. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:
SHRI NILOTPAL BASU:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Committee constituted by Government in 1990 under the Chairmanship of SHRI L.C. Jain, the then Member of Planning Commission, for economic development of Assam, had recommended utilisation of surplus Naphtha in the region for Aromatic projects;

(b) whether Bongaigaon Refinery and Petro-Chemicals Limited (BRPL) had submitted proposals for setting up of a Benzene Plant and for expansion of the existing Xylene Plant; and

(c) if so, what steps Government have taken for early clearance of these projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) The committee had recommended that a feasibility study on the prospect of

setting up an aromatic complex in the context of overall demand and supply of Naphtha in the country could be undertaken.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. BRPL has proposals for setting up Benzene Plant and expansion of the existing xylene plant. The proposals are at the various stages for investment approval.

Curtalling the Gas Allocation to Fertilizer Plants

1358. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA:
SHRI K.M. KHAN:
SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to cut 20 percent gas allocation to several fertilizer plants based on Hazira-Bijapur-Jagdishpur pipeline;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor, stating whether this cut was anticipated and whether availability of gas was estimated, if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether fertilizer plants are going to be affected adversely as a result thereof;

(d) if so, whether Government propose to reconsider the decision; and

(e) if so, by when and is not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) The availability of gas along the HBJ Pipeline is less than the total demand. Supplies are accordingly regulated through Action Plans drawn up from time to time.

(c) to (e) The feedstock requirement of fertilizer plants along the HBJ Pipeline are being met. Action has also been taken to further increase the supplies.

Complaints of Irregularities against Chairman of OSBs

1359. SHRI V. RAJESHWAR RAO:
DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) what are the names of the Judges who were Chairmen of Oil Selection Boards up till now;

(b) whether there are any complaints of corruption, irregularities, nepotism, favouritism and the like against such Chairmen;

(c) if so, whether these complaints have been verified and enquired into; if so, what has been the outcome; and

(d) what steps are being taken to prevent such irregularities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Names of the retired Judges who were appointed Chairmen of different Oil Selection Boards from time to time since 1.1.1993 are given in the enclosed statement. (*See below*)

(b) Complaints have been received against the selections made by some of the Oil Selection Boards including alleged indulgence of certain Chairmen and Members in irregularities and malpractices.

(c) and (d) Tenure of the Chairmen and Members of such Boards has been terminated by the Government owing to their unsatisfactory performance. A few selections challenged in the Court of Law have also been set aside by the Court. A Public Interest Litigation has already been filed in the High Court of Delhi. The complaints/allegations are being looked into by the Court and the matter is subjudice. Moreover, operation of the OSBs is presently in abeyance.